



## **NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD**

Office of Aviation Safety  
Washington, D.C. 20594

January 3, 2018

### **Attachment 3 – Airplane Crews on Taxiway “C” Statements**

## **OPERATIONAL FACTORS/HUMAN PERFORMANCE**

**DCA17IA148**

SFO Air Canada 759

Pilot Statements – United Airlines Flight 1 July 8, 2017

On July 07, 2017, I was the Captain of United Flight 1, a B787 from San Francisco to Singapore. Due to Rwy 28L and 01R being closed, we were on Taxiway C, north of Rwy 28R. We reached the Hold Line for Rwy 28R at approximately 11:25pm PDT and held number one for takeoff for about 30 minutes. The Hold Line is such that we were heading about 150 degrees magnetic and had a clear view of arriving traffic. Between 10 and 15 aircraft arrived on Rwy 28R while we were waiting.

At approximately 11:55pm, an aircraft asked the tower about runway lights. I don't recall the controller's response. I first noticed Air Canada when he was about 1-2 miles final because his landing lights were pointing at us. I commented to my crew that he was aiming at us, but thought he would correct to align with the runway. His course appeared from my angle to be from south of the runway centerline to north of the runway centerline. When he did not correct to align with the runway, I transmitted on a quiet tower frequency, "Where's that guy going, he's on the taxiway." The ATC controller then directed Air Canada to Go-Around.

The Air Canada A320 appeared to be on a normal glide path on his approach (as compared to all of the other arrivals we had observed), and flew directly over my aircraft at approximately 100-200 feet. I notified the tower controller that Air Canada had flown over UA1. He acknowledged.

The weather was clear with unrestricted visibility. (We could see a string of aircraft out to at least 15 miles). The winds were light, with a slight headwind. (my crew had discussed the wind for our Takeoff Data), but I don't recall the exact wind being called.

Keith W Freeberg  
SFOFO  
B787 Captain

I was the flying First Officer on UAL flight 1 that operated on July 7<sup>th</sup> from San Francisco (SFO) to Singapore (SIN).

Due to the closure of runway 28L for repairs, we were given unusual taxi instructions to runway 28R. We were cleared to taxi around the departure end of runways 28L and 28R, then east bound on taxiway C to hold short of Runways 1L and 1R. We were then switched from ground control to SFO tower frequency. Tower cleared us to cross runways 1L and 1R, and continue on taxiway C to hold short of runway 28R. The Captain taxied up to a few feet short of the hold short line for runway 28R. We were parked at a 45 degree angle on taxiway C, where it curved to become perpendicular to runway 28R, holding short of the runway with a clear view of all the arriving traffic for runway 28R.

We held there for approximately 30 minutes and at one point querying the tower as to when we might expect a 'hole' to open up allowing us to depart. San Francisco tower responded that they would let us know. After observing at least a dozen airplanes land, we noticed a jet with its landing lights pointing right at us at about 700 feet AGL. I assumed that this airplane was south of the centerline for runway 28R and was correcting back to line up with the runway centerline. When he continued on the same path, heading directly for us we all commented that he was coming right at us. The Captain quickly keyed the microphone and announced that he was lined up on the taxiway. The jet passed right over our airplane and slightly to our left at what I estimated to be between 100 to 200 feet.

SFO tower directed Air Canada to go around. Air Canada repeated back the clearance. At this point he was out of our view. Our Captain again keyed the microphone and announced that Air Canada had just flown directly over us. The tower answered back that he saw that United and we'll get you going soon. Very shortly after that we were cleared for takeoff on runway 28R, winds were 250 at 8 knots as I recall. I heard the tower clear Air Canada to contact departure. We made an uneventful takeoff and continued our flight to Singapore.

I believe that due to the quick actions of Captain Freeberg, immediately getting on the microphone and alerting the tower and Air Canada, a catastrophic situation was avoided.

First Officer Clifford Sheppard

I was a flight deck crew member on United 1 on July 7, 2017. We pushed back from the terminal at 1047 pm local. My assigned position was relief officer. I was occupying the seat behind the first officer. We were holding short of runway 28R on taxiway C in the number one position. The captain had positioned the aircraft at an angle to the hold short line that allowed us to view aircraft on final approach to 28R. We had been holding for approximately 30 minutes waiting for a break in the arriving aircraft that would allow for us to depart on 28R. 28R was the only runway being used for landing. 28L was closed due to construction and we were too heavy to depart on 1L as most aircraft were using 1L for takeoff. At approximately 1155 pm local, as I was looking down reviewing the flight plan, someone on the flight deck said something about the position of the approaching aircraft on final. I looked up to see the landing lights aimed right at us. The aircraft appeared to be approximately on a 1/4 mile final and turning towards our position on the taxiway. Our captain then transmitted on tower frequency "Where's this guy going?" and "He's on the taxiway". Meaning the approaching aircraft was aligned with taxiway C. San Francisco tower then instructed the aircraft to go around. Seconds later the aircraft flew right over us. Not more than two minutes later we were cleared for takeoff. We departed on runway 28R and continued uneventfully to Singapore.

David Corsetti  
SFO 787 F/O

Statement for NTSB Regarding Air Canada 759 – July 7, 2017

As second Captain for United Flight 1 (SFO-SYD) I was sitting in the rear left jumpseat. We were on the east end of taxiway Charley waiting for takeoff clearance. I was the first one in the cockpit to see Air Canada heading right for us. I said, "there is a plane heading right for us". I did not transmit this or anything else outside of the flight deck.

Immediately after I said this, Captain Freeberg looked up at the plane and transmitted to the Tower the words as recorded by ATC.

I heard all of the radio conversations between Captain Freeberg and the Tower and between the Tower and Air Canada as they were in their go around.

I only saw Air Canada as they were heading for us.

We taxied onto the runway for a normal takeoff.

Captain David Luskin

SFO Air Canada 759

Pilot Statements, United Airlines Flight 1118, July 8, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

On July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017 I was operating United Flight 1118 from SFO to MCO departing SFO at 2305L/0605Z. After pushback from Gate 61 we were given instructions to taxi to Runway 28R for takeoff. The final leg of our taxi instructions placed us number four in line on taxiway Charlie directly behind a UA 787. After holding for some time we heard Air Canada 759 check in with SFO tower on 120.5. The initial check-in seemed normal. The Air Canada Airbus checked in on the FMS Bridge Visual 28R and tower issued the winds and cleared the Airbus to land on 28R. As Air Canada came closer to the airport we lost sight of their aircraft at around 500-600agl in their descent due to our location on the taxiway behind the larger 787. On short final to what we now know was taxiway Charlie Air Canada 759 asked the tower controller if the runway was clear and if they were cleared to land because he saw lights on the Runway. Tower stated that the runway was clear and restated that they were cleared to land. A few moments later one of the pilots ahead of us stated "where's he going" and then "he's lined up on the taxiway". Then on very short final Air Canada 759 was issued a Go Around instruction from the tower controller. During the subsequent Go Around, the Air Canada Airbus over flew the four aircraft holding on taxiway Charlie. I would estimate that the Air Canada Airbus passed between 200-300 ft. above our aircraft when overhead.

While the Air Canada 759 crew made a serious mistake that went unchecked for way too long. I believe that it is important to note that the tower controller was performing way too many functions, IE Ramp, Ground, Tower and at times ops vehicles. I believe that the audio from the 45-55 minutes prior to this event will support this belief.

Sincerely,

Robert S. Wallace  
United Airlines 737 Captain

Statement of First Officer Patrick Easter  
United 1118 KSFO to KMCO  
0605Z 08 July 2017  
B-737-900ER

On 08 July 2017 at approximately 0612z we taxied to runway 28R at SFO via taxiway "B" then "Z" then "C". This was a nonstandard route due to airport construction. RWY 28L and RWY 1R were closed. Air Traffic Controller was responsible for clearance, ground, and tower communications. With the runway and taxiway closures, controller was very busy with departures and arrivals. We taxied expeditiously to taxiway "C" between "N" and "W", then experienced a 30 minute delay to takeoff. We were number 4 in line to takeoff. Number one in line was UAL 787 (United 1), number 2 was a Thai A340, number 3 was a UAL 787. At approximately 0655 zulu I heard Air Canada 759 ask if he was cleared to land, he remarked that there appeared to be lights on the runway. ATC replied that there was no one on the runway and Air Canada 759 was the only traffic for 28R and was cleared to land. Approximately 1 second later there was a radio transmission from an unidentified aircraft "Where's this guy going" followed by "He's on the taxiway". Then 1 or 2 seconds later ATC directed Air Canada 759 to go around and state that he was lined up on the taxiway. I observed Air Canada 759 fly over us climbing on the go around at about 200 to 300 feet. Then approximately 45 seconds later United 1 reported to ATC that "Air Canada flew right over us". That was the end of the incident.

SFO Air Canada 759  
Pilot Statements – United Airlines Flight 863 (SFO-SYD)  
July 7, 2017

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UAL 863 was on taxiway C just short of W awaiting takeoff 28R

There was confusion on tower frequency about AIR CANADA landing runway and alignment for 28R.

We turned on all aircraft lights. AIR CANADA went around

Captain Radford  
United Airlines  
SFOFO 787 CAP

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I was the flying First Officer on UAL 863 on July 7th. We taxied out to 28R via A, B1, Z & C. We were holding at the approach end of 28R awaiting takeoff, number 3 behind UAL 1 and Philippine Airlines. Runway 28L was notamed closed and there were a lot of lights and equipment on the runway. The only "X" to indicate that the runway was closed, that I noticed, was down the runway, closer to 1R than the approach end of 28L. I did not look to see if there was one near the approach end or not.

I heard the tower clear Air Canada to land on 28R. I then heard Air Canada say that they saw lights and wanted to confirm that they were cleared to land on 28R. The tower replayed that it was clear for them.

We thought it looked like they were aligning with taxiway C and were watching to see if they turned. It quickly became obvious that they were lining up with the runway, when UAL 1 said "Hey, where are those guys going, they are lined up on the taxiway? Our captain, turned on all of our lights just before the tower told Air Canada to go around. I don't know what altitude Air Canada descended to. But I believe we were only seconds away from a collision.

First Officer Sandy Christison

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On July 7, 2017, I was the relief pilot on United 863, San Francisco to Sydney. For this flight, I was physically seated in the right rear cockpit seat behind the flying first officer.

Our preflight and taxi were normal, except for our taxi routing, which took us from Spot 10, out A, to B1, then Z, where we waited behind a Philippines A340 at the west end of Z for several minutes. We followed Philippines partway down C, where they waited for several minutes before continuing across 1L and 1R. We were delayed crossing 1L and 1R for several minutes, then we continued across. The lineup on C was UAL 1, which was holding short of 28R facing south (ready to take the runway), followed by Philippines, which was facing east at the end of C right behind UAL 1, and then us, UAL 863. We were about 1000 behind the Philippines jet, as it apparently is our Captain's normal technique to leave a large gap between himself and aircraft in front if possible. In any event, on this night, that put us in the "touchdown aimpoint" for Air Canada.

We had been sitting motionless for approximately 10 minutes, about 1000 feet behind Philippines, when Air Canada made their first radio call that got our attention. Prior to this, UAL 1 had asked at least once if ATC was going to find a hole for them to depart between all the landing aircraft on 28R. This is significant, as I suspect the Captain of UAL 1 was spending a lot of time looking out the window to his left at the incoming traffic, looking for a gap in the incoming traffic. His awareness may have prevented this potential disaster.

Air Canada was cleared for the FMS Bridge Visual approach, but unknown to me if they tuned the ILS for 28R to fly that approach.

At some point, Air Canada said there was lighting on the runway, and asked if it was clear. Tower responded that there was no one on the runway, and they were the only ones on 28R. Within 3 seconds of this transmission, someone (I suspect UAL 1) said, "Where's this guy going. He's on the taxiway."

Within one or two seconds of this transmission, all of us in our cockpit became fully aware that Air Canada was lost and headed our way. Our Captain turned on all of our lights, to include the landing lights, taxi light, turnoff lights.

A few seconds later we saw Air Canada flying directly over our heads at an estimated 100-200 feet. We could clearly hear the sound of their engines as they were in the go around that tower had just directed. I strongly suspect that tower was alerted to the improper lineup the same way that we were, which is from the radio call which I believe was from UAL 1 about "where is this guy going?". I hate to think how this would have turned out without that critical radio heads-up.

It was clear from tower's comment to someone else on frequency seconds after this incident that there was only one controller working the tower and ground control functions.

Greg L Sembower  
UAL 863 First Officer

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Here is my detailed report of the events on Flight 863 SFO-SYD on 7/7/17.

I was one of two relief first officers for this flight. We had taxied out for take off, and were holding on taxiway C, number 3 in line runway 28R. Air Canada 759 had checked in on the visual approach for 28R. Air Canada 759 then called the tower back to ask if there was lights on the runway, and to verify that they were cleared to land. The tower controller told them that there was nothing on the runway and they were cleared to land. We could see from our position while holding on taxiway C that Air Canada appeared to be lined up right of where they should have been. They were lined up on taxiway C. A few seconds after that, my Captain turned on all of our exterior lights. About the same time United 1 on the radio said, "Where is this guy going." "He is lined up on the taxiway". A few seconds more went by and then finally Tower told Air Canada to go around. Air Canada went around, and a huge disaster that would have many fatalities, including myself was avoided.

I felt that there were two main factors that lead to this situation. The first being why Air Canada was lined up on C instead of 28R. 28L was closed for construction, and they were working on the runway. I don't know if they knew this or not, but somehow thought they were lined up on 28R. I don't know if they had the ILS tuned for 28R or not, but they were not following it if they did.

Second, I feel the tower controller should not have been the only controller working the entire airport. He was working multiple frequencies, controlling tower duties for Take offs on 1L and 28R, and Landings 28R. He was also performing all ground control duties. I feel when Air Canada called with questions about the runway, this should have been the cue he needed to closely pay attention to that flight. That apparently did not happen. You can tell from the reaction time between when United 1 called "Where is this guy going? He is lined up on the taxiway" to when he told Air Canada to go around. It took a few seconds for him to evaluate the situation. Those few seconds were several more feet that Air Canada continued his approach down to around 100'

Sincerely,

First Officer Steve Shoquist  
United Airlines



NZ/0717/0565  
19 July 2017

**Captain Jim C. Sydiongco**  
Director General  
Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines  
[REDACTED]  
Pasay City, Metro Manila  
Philippines 1301

Attention : **Captain Donaldo Mendoza**  
Flight Standards and Inspectorate Service

Subject : **AC759 Near-miss Incident with PR115 in SFO**

Dear Sir:

Below is a report received from one of our Flight Deck Crew with the following details:

<b>Location of Occurrence</b>	:	San Francisco International Airport
<b>Date of Occurrence</b>	:	07 July 2017
<b>Phase of flight</b>	:	Taxi-out
<b>Aircraft Type/Registry</b>	:	A340-313 / RP-C3441
<b>Flight No./Sector</b>	:	PR115 / MNL-SFO

"PR115 departed KSFO for RPLL on July 07, 2017. From gate A5, it took us 35mins to taxiway C holding point runway 28R. We were no. 2 on the takeoff sequence behind United Airlines. There were 2 more aircrafts lined up behind us. Air Canada is making an approach to runway 28R, as the landing aircraft is getting closer, we noticed that it was aligned with taxiway C and not with runway 28R. We immediately put on the taxi switch to TO, to provide visual position for the approaching aircraft. After the landing aircraft passed right above us, he was instructed by the tower to make a go-around. We were able to depart on runway 28R at 0704Z. No further incidents happened"

This report is being submitted for whatever action you may deem necessary and we have also submitted a similar report to the **Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)**.

Very truly yours,

[REDACTED]  
**Nelsie M. Fabila**  
Vice President  
Safety Department



To: **Capt. Rainiel V. Viola | OIC – Manager**

Flight Safety Division

Safety Department

**Capt. Daniel Oliver M. Castro II**

A340/330 Fleet Safety Pilot

From: Captain Avelino R. Mendoza JR. – A340/330

First Officer Jose Paolo R. Andes – A340/330

Second Officer Quintin Kristoffer L. Calderon – A340/330

Second Officer Kristian P. Mamuyac – A340/330

Date: 31 AUGUST 2017

Subject: NEAR – MISS INCIDENT

Dear Sir,

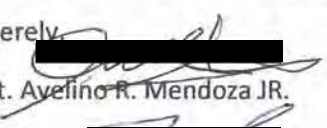
We are writing this report concerning a near – miss incident that took place at the San Francisco International Airport in the late evening of 07 July 2017.

It was almost midnight. Visibility was good. Following a long taxi from Parking gate A5 for Runway 28R, PR115 held short of taxiway Whiskey on taxiway Charlie, as they were number two in sequence for departure RWY28R. The crew recalls Air Canada 759, who was on final approach, asking the control tower if they were indeed cleared for RWY28R, as they were seeing lights on the runway, to which the control tower confirmed that they were cleared to land and that there was nobody on the runway. Later on, a pilot on another aircraft made some remarks/comments regarding the alignment on approach of AC759. From where PR115 was holding, it was difficult to say whether AC759 was indeed mis-aligned from the runway as it seemed like a usual visual illusion that AC759 might have been battling some crosswind, which was why they seemed to have been facing taxiway Charlie. It was only until they were on short final that it became evident that they were indeed lined up for the taxiway. As they were flying in closer to the number one traffic, United Airlines, holding short of RWY28R, the crew of PR115, dictated by instinct, switched on their landing lights, and all nose lights, to be more visible, and so that AC759 would see it obvious that they were heading to the taxiway where four aircraft were queuing for departure. It was only after AC759 flew over the second aircraft, PR115, that the control tower instructed AC759 to go around.

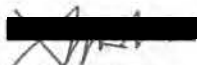
A few minutes later, PR115 took off Rwy28R uneventful, without further incident.

For your information. Thank you.

Sincerely,

  
Capt. Avelino R. Mendoza JR.

  
S/O Quintin Kristoffer L. Calderon

  
F/O Jose Paolo R. Andes

  
S/O Kristian P. Mamuyac